

THE LITTLE KITE - SYNOPSIS by James F. Robinson

Logline: A young Mayan girl, Tomasa, clashes with her strong-willed mother and loses a beloved grandfather. Rebellion and determination lead to discovery of herself and of her ancient Indigenous culture.

Setting: Current day, remote indigenous towns in mountainous Guatemala.

Characters: VERONICA, a young Mayan mother and talented weaver, struggle to support her family, and protect her culture from disappearing, TOMASA, Veronica's 8-year old daughter is headstrong and rejects the burden of carrying on ancient traditions, and MR. MERIDA an old kite maker that was Tomasa's grandfather's best friend.

Synopsis: Tomasa (8) is a young indigenous K'iche' Mayan girl who lives in the remote mountain town of Chichicastenango, Guatemala with her Mother and baby sister Sophia. Her father has left the family to find work in Mexico, and has not been heard from in months.



Tomasa's mother Veronica makes intricate hand-woven textiles - the kind Mayan women have been crafting for millennia. It is the only source of income for the family. Weaving is a sacred and endangered Mayan art, and Veronica insists that Tomasa become a weaver. Tomasa is not interested, a source of major conflict between mother and daughter.

Tomasa's Grandfather is dying, and lives far away. Tomasa is told she must weave a belt for him. But Tomasa makes a mess of the project - she rips it off the loom in frustration and hides it, a major act of rebellion for a Mayan girl.

That day the family learns the Grandfather has died. Tomasa instantly believes her rebellious action must have somehow caused the death of her Grandfather.

Veronica must sell her latest weaving, as well as her family heritage of vintage weavings for a pittance so she can pay a debt and travel for the funeral. They travel to Santiago Sacatepéquez, a Kaqchikel town with a different language and culture new to Tomasa. Tomasa's affluent Aunt and Cousin have come from the city for the funeral. Both are ashamed of their Mayan heritage and strive to pose as white "Ladinos."

There is a traditional Mayan-Catholic funeral. After, Tomasa finally finishes the belt, under the eye of her Grandmother, which goes on the family altar honoring the Grandfather. Maya-Catholic tradition believes candles must stay lit on the altar and the family must pray for nine days as the departed's soul passes out of Purgatory.

Tomasa meets Mr. Mérida, her Grandfather's former best friend. He is a master in the making of giant kites for the Santiago kite festival on All Saints Day. This festival is famous throughout the country, where kites as tall as 4 story buildings are made by hand and displayed. Tradition says the giant kites play a part in the welcoming of the ancestors' spirits as they visit their family in the cemetery.

Tomasa decides she wants to build a kite to honor her Grandfather. She hopes this will make amends for her destruction of the belt. Mr. Mérida says girls don't build kites. Tomasa is stubborn - she begins the difficult process to build a kite, eventually with Mr. Mérida's reluctant help.

Tomasa secretly confesses her guilt about the death of her Grandfather to Mr. Mérida. The old man corrects her, telling her he was with her Grandfather at his death, the day *before* destroyed the weaving. Together, they finish a beautiful small kite.

Mr. Mérida falls ill and must be hospitalized. Then, Tomasa's jealous cousin secretly destroys her kite one night. Tomasa is devastated, but with her mother's encouragement, finds the determination to rebuild the kite from scratch, this time without Mérida's help. Despite setbacks and complications, the new kite, ugly and awkward, is finished just in time.

All Saints Day brings a spectacle of huge, brightly colored kites in a grand festival. Despite many failures, Tomasa is able to get her kite aloft with her hand-made belt attached as a tail.

From a hospital window, Mérida sees Tomasa's ugly kite flying in the air, darting around the beautiful giant kites of the men.